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ABSTRACT

Notes are presented on classroom organization, discipline, motivation, and teacher concern for use with instructional radio. Attributes of a regular classroom and a good radio classroom are compared, including teacher/radio positioning, materials organization and presentation, the use of sound and silence, cueing and voice use, demonstrations, lesson plans and format, timing, student-teacher relationship, and individualization and pacing. Hints for making the radio program more like the classroom are also provided, and include having an opening theme song, greeting the students, using an opening involvement exercise, theme music to open each lesson segment, sound effects, announcing upcoming segments, providing clear demonstrations, using a single teacher and different format for each segment, making instruction clear and simple, consistent sequencing, keeping worksheets out of the way when not in use, keeping the pacing up throughout the program, establishing a quiet working atmosphere, using lesson summaries and relaxation segments, developing skills, and ending each day's work in a standard way. (MSE)

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FIELD NOTES

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THE SCHOOL CLASSROOM AND THE RADIO CLASSROOM

by
Esta de Fossard

The Academy for Educational Development, Inc. (AED) is a nonprofit service organization active in many areas of education. Under contract to the Office of Education, Bureau for Science and Technology of the United States Agency for International Development (AID), the Academy is assisting the Kenyan Ministry of Basic Education through the Kenya Institute of Education to develop a radio-based English language arts program for grades one through three. The Radio Language Arts Project (RLAP) is a five-year project designed to develop, implement, and test the effectiveness of an instructional system which uses radio as the major medium of instruction. The end product will be a series of 585 taped lessons, appropriate student tests, teacher orientation materials, classroom observation and data-gathering procedures, and an evaluation of the project's effectiveness.

ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD CLASSROOM

The radio classroom must make effective use of the medium as well as provide an environment that facilitates learning. Attributes of any good classroom include:

- Organization
- Discipline
- Motivation
- Care and Concern

The radio classroom must seek to provide this kind of environment. Following are some suggestions for how this can be done.

	REGULAR CLASSROOM	RADIO CLASSROOM
1.	The teacher is in front. The children watch him/her for direction.	The radio is in front. Children focus their attention on radio. Blackboard can be beside radio, if possible. Children must have a point of focus.

2.	The facilities and materials that children use are organized in shelves, boxes, cupboards, etc.	Radio must provide the same type of "classroom" organization by creating segments marked with distinct sound cues.
3.	Classroom teacher requires silence while children work. Noise is seen as distracting.	The radio must provide periods of silence for work and for oral responses. While it is true that normal radio programs abhor "dead air," we must remember we are creating a class, not an entertainment. If pauses are to be long, then very soft, non-disruptive music can be used to fill them. If the same music is used in all work periods, it will not be so distracting.
4.	The teacher uses VISUAL cues to alert the children to what is going on. For example, while talking about using the Math book, the teacher will hold it up.	The radio must replace visual cues with aural cues to assist children to anticipate and understand what is going on. For example--if children are required to use worksheets or exercise books, they can be given a short sound cue every time they are asked to use them.
5.	The classroom uses one teacher only; sometimes assisted by an aid.	The radio should not confuse children by using too many different voices. Ideally there should be only two teachers in any one segment--so that modelling can take place and so that one teacher can give the questions; another give the answers--thus providing a further aural cue for the children.
6.	The classroom teacher demonstrates the task to be performed by: • writing on the blackboard • demonstrating on a worksheet	The radio class must demonstrate (model) what it requires the children to do.
7.	The classroom teacher works to a set curriculum that has been devised to cover the whole year. From this, the teacher creates discrete lesson plans for each day's work.	The radio lessons must work to a curriculum that has been developed in advance. From this, there must be lesson plans for each broadcast.

8.	The good teacher follows an efficient teaching strategy: • introduce the topic • demonstrate • allow practise • give reinforcement of right answers • summarize	A good radio lesson must follow the same format.
9.	A classroom lesson is paced so that children do not get tired. Periods of relaxation are provided throughout the school day.	The radio lesson must be similarly paced, giving children time for breaks in which they have brief periods of physical activity.
10.	The classroom teacher writes on the blackboard the day, the date and the subject being taught.	The radio must provide the same information, where possible. Sometimes it is not wise to include the day and the date because broadcast schedules have a way of changing without notice! However, children should be clearly told what subject is being taught at any part of the program.
11.	The teacher develops a series of commands that the children learn to follow. The teacher trains the students to respond to certain commands automatically--in order to save time and avoid confusion.	The radio class must develop a series of commands, accompanied by clear sound cues that will assist the children in following the lesson.
12.	Classroom students get to know their teacher as a person.	Radio students must be given the same opportunity to "know" their radio teachers* even if they never see them. This can be accomplished by talking "to" the children, rather than "at" them, and by allowing the radio teachers to model the lesson, and by involving radio teachers in songs and games rather then using commercial recordings of songs and games.
13.	The teacher can give individual attention to children having difficulties.	The radio class must make allowances for children who cannot keep up with the radio class. This is best done by inviting such children to stay after the lesson and go through it with the helper.

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* When there is a classroom teacher present in the classroom, the radio characters who instruct should not be referred to as teachers but simply called by name.

SOME HINTS FOR MAKING THE RADIO INTO A CLASSROOM

1. Provide an opening theme song that radio teachers and children sing together. This should be an original song created just for the program and about the program. (This song becomes the lesson "entry"--rather like walking into the classroom.)

2. Greet the children. If there is more than one radio teacher, they should greet one another and greet the children. If a number of teachers will be used throughout a long program, they can all be introduced at the beginning of the program and give a collective greeting. If there is doubt about the time of day the program will be broadcast, use a general greeting, rather then Good Morning or Good Evening.

3. Use some sort of involvement exercise EARLY in the program, so that the attention of the students is caught at the outset. Do not spend a lot of time giving instructions to the off-air teacher or assistant. Do that within the body of the program.

4. Use theme music to introduce each portion of the lesson, so children can anticipate what is coming and adjust their "mind-set" to it.

5. Use sound effects (gong, whistle, etc.) to alert children to often repeated instructions, such as "Stand Up;" "Sit Down;" "Turn over your worksheets;" "Pick up your pencils."

6. Announce the various segments of the lesson clearly. Do no rely on the music cue alone and do not leave the children guessing about what they're supposed to be doing. Err on the side of too much instruction, rather than too little.

7. Always demonstrate (model) what the children are supposed to do.

8. Have ONE teacher in charge of each instructional segment. Use an assistant if necessary, but make it clear to the children that there is ONE voice giving the actual instruction.

9. Make all instructions clear and simple to follow. Use the same instructions every time the same behavior is required. Where the children are required to perform an action, try to make the action verb the last word in the sentence. For example: Children, write.

10. Where there is a sequence of instructions to be followed, establish a pattern and stick to it. Example:

    Children, look at the blackboard as your teacher writes the word "soap."
    Pause - 10 seconds
    Children, read the word with me - "soap."
    Children, look at your worksheets.
    Put your finger on the square with the dog.
    You are going to write the word soap on the line in that square.
    Children, write.

11. Where possible, have worksheets put out of the way when they're not in use. If the children do not have desks, they can be told to turn the worksheets face down--and the instruction should be followed by a sound cue. Worksheets are very distracting if the children have them visible in front of them all the time.

12. Keep the pace UP within a teaching segment. Allowing too much time also allows young minds to wander. Observe the classroom carefully to determine the length of the pauses needed for student responses.

13. Don't be afraid to tell the children you're going to have drill practice. Drill can be an important part of radio learning. If the children know that's what it is, they will enter into it more willingly than if you don't tell them, and try to motivate them to drill in a round about way.

14. Create a working atmosphere during a working segment. This means order and QUIET.

15. Summarize the lesson briefly when it is over and tell the students it is over.

16. Establish a bank of short relaxation segments--songs and games--that can be performed by children in cramped quarters. Frequently the children cannot get out of their desks or move around. These relaxation segments do not need to be more than a minute or so long. Balance learning segments with relaxation segments.

17. If you are teaching more than one subject within the radio lesson, establish different formats for the various subjects. This makes it easier for the children to identify the subject they're working on, and it also provides the variety that is necessary to maintain their interest.

18. Make sure that the children are taught to listen. Do not assume that they know how to listen. If they are not accustomed to radio and they are not accustomed to having stories told to them, it is likely they will not know how to listen attentively for a period of time. An important part of the success of any radio school depends on how well it trains its students to listen.

19. Make sure that the personality of the radio teacher is allowed to come through, but without swamping the program or taking up too much program time. Simple greetings, modeling, and joining the children in songs and games are first steps that can be taken in this regard. Writers should attend studio recording sessions so they can gain an understanding of the character of the teachers they're writing for and allow for this in their scripts.

20. End each day's lesson in a standard fashion--perhaps with the theme song again--to indicate to the children that the day's lesson is over.